

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L JAKARTA 0520

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, ID

SUBJECT: ALI MURTOPO REENTERS POLITICAL SCENE

REF: SURABAYA 12

1. SUMMARY. PRESIDENTIAL ASSISTANT ALI MURTOPO CHOSE THE ANNIVERSARY OF A KEY EVENT IN THE ANTI-SUKARNO STRUGGLE TO REENTER THE POLITICAL SCENE AFTER A FIVE-MONTH ABSENCE. HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND THE PRIVATE REMARKS OF ONE OF HIS KEY AIDES SUGGEST THAT HE WILL TRY TO SETTLE THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY LEADERSHIP FIGHT IN THE GOVERNMENT'S FAVOR AND WILL BEGIN ORGANIZING A PRO-SUHARTO MOVEMENT TO ENSURE THE GOVERNMENT'S SUCCESS IN THE UPCOMING PEOPLE CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY (MPR) SESSION. POLITICAL TENSION IS THUS LIKELY TO RISE. END SUMMARY.

2. ENDING A FIVE-MONTH PERIOD OF ALMOST TOTAL POLITICAL SECLUSION CAUSED BY A SERIOUS EYE AILMENT AND THE COURT TRIAL OF HIS SON, LIEUTENANT GENERAL ALI MURTOPO APPEARED ON THE PODIUM OF A JANUARY 11 RALLY ORGANIZED LARGELY BY HIS STAFF TO COMMEMORATE THE TWELFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FORMATION OF THE THE STUDENT MOVEMENT WHICH BROUGHT DOWN SUKARNO'S OLD ORDER. A RIVAL CEREMONY ORGANIZED BY ANTI-GOVERNMENT STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS AND ADDRESSED BY HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST BUYUNG NASUTION AND RETIRED LIEUTENANT GENERAL KEMAL IDRIS DREW BETTER PRESS COVERAGE WITH ATTACKS ON PROGRESS UNDER THE "NEW ORDER," BUT MURTOPO PRODUCED PARLIAMENT CHAIRMAN ADAM MALIK AND A BIG MAJORITY OF THE ORIGINAL

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FOUNDERS OF THE 1966 STUDENT MOVEMENT FOR HIS "DO". HIS REMARKS ON THIS OCCASION WERE GENERALLY CONCILIATORY AND, IN CONTRAST TO THE SURABAYA COMMEMORATION (REFTEL), THE DAY CONCLUDED WITHOUT INCIDENT.

3. MURTOPO FOLLOWED UP WITH A JANUARY 11 PRESS CONFERENCE IN WHICH HE ANNOUNCED THAT HE HAD RETURNED TO FULL TIME WORK WITH THE GOVERNMENT POLITICAL ORGANIZATION GOLKAR AND THE INTELLIGENCE COORDINATION BOARD. ASSUMING A GENERALLY MILD BUT OCCASIONALLY FIRM STANCE, MURTOPO MADE FOLLOWING POINTS:

A. CURRENT POLITICAL MOVEMENTS HAVE NOT YET EXCEEDED THE LIMITS OF ACCEPTABLE DEMOCRATIC ACTION, BUT POLITICS WILL INTENSIFY AS INDONESIA APPROACHES THE MPR SESSION. CARE MUST THEREFORE BE TAKEN TO PREVENT A BREAKDOWN IN POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT AS OCCURRED DURING THE 1974 ANTI-TANAKA RIOTS (MALARI). MURTOPO CHARACTERIZED MALARI AS A VERY DAMAGING STEP BACKWARD AND DENIED THE CHARGE RECENTLY DISPLAYED ON STUDENT POSTERS THAT HE HAD BEEN BEHIND IT.

B. SINCE IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE MPR TAKE DECISIONS, MAJORITY VOTE PROCEDURES SHOULD BE EMPLOYED IF CONSENSUS CANNOT BE REACHED. MURTOPO WAS OPTIMISTIC, HOWEVER, OVER PROSPECTS FOR AVOIDING A SPLIT VOTE.

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C. HE WOULD NOT INTERFERE WITH THE "INTERNAL AFFAIRS" OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY BUT CONSIDERED THE ISNAENI LEADERSHIP FACTION TO BE LEGITIMATELY INSTALLED.

D. JUSTICE HAD BEEN CARRIED OUT WITH THE TRIAL AND ACQUITTAL OF HIS SON, ALTHOUGH SOME ELEMENTS HAD ATTEMPTED TO MISCONSTRUE THE COURT'S ACTION AND DESTROY HIM PERSONALLY.

4. MURTOPO'S NEXT APPEARANCE WILL BE AT THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY CONGRESS ON JANUARY 17 IN SOLO, CENTRAL JAVA. HIS AIDES TELL US THAT THEY EXPECT THE PDI LEADERSHIP FIGHT TO BE RESOLVED BY THAT TIME. ONE MEANS OF RESOLVING THIS PROBLEM WAS REVEALED BY MINISTER OF STATE FOR PUBLIC WELFARE AND PDI LEADER SUNAWAR SUKOWATI ON JANUARY 12 WHEN HE ADVOCATED THE GOVERNMENT'S INVOKING A PROVISION OF LAW 3 OF 1975 WHICH PERMITS THE PRESIDENT TO DISMISS PARTY LEADERS AND NOMINATE CARETAKERS IN CERTAIN EXTREME SITUATIONS.

5. ONCE THE PDI LEADERSHIP IS SOLIDLY ESTABLISHED IN THE SUHARTO CAMP, MURTOPO MAY WELL TURN HIS ATTENTION TOWARDS BUILDING UP CAMPAIGN TO SUPPORT SUHARTO'S REELECTION.

CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (CSIS)
STAFFER LIM BIAN KIE INDICATED TO US THAT HE WILL HELP
IN THIS ENDEAVOR, USING AS A BASE FORMER LEADERS OF THE
1966 STUDENT AND YOUTH MOVEMENTS WHO ATTENDED THE JANUARY
10 RALLY.

6. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH HIS OPENING LINES WERE CONCILIA-
TORY, MURTOPO'S REENTRY ONTO THE POLITICAL SCENE WILL AL-
MOST CERTAINLY HEIGHTEN TENSION IN THIS FINAL SCENE OF
SUHARTO'S SECOND TERM. STUDENTS WILL IMAGINE HIS HAND TO
BE BEHIND EVERY UNTOWARD INCIDENT AND, IN SOME CASES, THEY
WILL PROBABLY BE RIGHT.
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